
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Property Address:	1400-1404 14th Street, NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	14th Street Historic District		Consent Calendar
		X	Concept Review
Meeting Date:	June 28, 2012	X	Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	12-355	X	New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott		Demolition
			Subdivision

Abdo Development, represented by architect Maurice Walters, seeks conceptual design review for construction of a six-story retail, office and residential building on a corner site at the intersection of 14th Street and Rhode Island Avenue in the 14th Street Historic District. The site is currently occupied by two non-contributing buildings that would be demolished and one contributing building that would be retained and rehabilitated for retail use.

Property Description

1400 and 1402 14th Street are one-story commercial buildings that were constructed in 1970 and 1960 respectively and which have been extensively remodeled with new facades in recent years. Based on their dates of construction falling well beyond the period of significance for the 14th Street Historic District (1855-1940), they are identified as non-contributing to the district in the National Register nomination.

1404 14th Street is a two-story, brick commercial building dating constructed in 1894. It has a pressed brick façade capped by a corbelled cornice, a bank of three segmental arched double-hung upper-story windows, and a formed metal storefront surround. Based on its date of construction and characteristics, it is contributing to the historic district.

Proposal

The project calls for demolishing 1400 and 1402 to construct a six-story building with a tall retail base, second story office space (envisioned for use by the applicant), and four levels of residential units. The building would be clad in red brick with dark brick accents; as it will rise higher than the structures on each side, the design and material treatment would be equivalent on all sides. The street elevations would have projecting bays on floors 3 through 6, with a rounded glass corner tower at the corner. A projection on floors 4 through 6 would extend much of the length of the north side of the building, cantilevered 4-5 feet over 1404 14th Street; the north projection would be set back approximately 24 feet from the buildings' street facades.

The building would rise to a height of 67 feet to the top of the parapet. A penthouse, set back approximately 20 feet from Rhode Island Avenue and 14th Street, would rise to a height of 74'8" with the elevator override topping out at 78'4."

Evaluation

The Board reviewed a concept put forward by the applicant for this site several times in 2004. When first proposed, the project did not include the corner building (under lease to Caribou Coffee); later, the proposal called for cantilevering out over top of the retained corner building, but was not able to fully engage it into the composition. Understandably, the design suffered from the constraints of not having enough frontage to comfortably ground the desired building program and the contortions required in maintaining this non-descript building.

The incorporation of the corner site and removal of 1400 has allowed for the development of much more compatible and architecturally pleasing solution. The new proposal has been designed with a strong sense of verticality emphasized through the use of monumental piers between the projecting bays. It takes advantage of its corner site with a contemporary glass tower element that evokes similar towers on the district's historic buildings, without being overly historicist or referential. The design of the ground floor continues the rhythm of the small-scale buildings to the north, while using elements such as transom windows, a projecting metal awning, and a brick sign band to provide a human scale to the large openings. The recess of the glazing within the first and second floor openings will give the building shadow, depth and weight that is common in historic buildings but atypical for modern construction.

The design has evolved in consultation with the staff. When initially submitted, the top floor was partially recessed in an effort to try to ease the height discrepancy between the new construction and surrounding historic buildings. However, the proportions of the building suffered, and the stepped profile appeared busy, truncated and apologetic. The HPO encouraged that the top floor be pulled to the face of the building and that the top be emphasized. The result improves the design, and is more compatible in its proportions, roof profile and vertical emphasis.

The cantilevered bay on the north side of the building is an unusual feature, possible only by incorporating 1404 into the project. However, by designing the cantilever as a series of projecting bays, limiting their projection to a depth of 4-5 feet, and pulling them back substantially from the front elevation of 1404, it doesn't appear as a discordant or incompatible element. Rather, the series of projections adds visual interest, rhythm and scale to the long side elevation that will likely remain exposed over the tops of the smaller historic buildings on this block.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board find the proposed concept compatible with the character of the historic district and consistent with the purposes of the preservation act.